

UTC Warrington

Dallam Lane, Warrington, Cheshire WA2 7NG

Inspection dates

14 to 15 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The college has developed and improved over its first three years. Leaders and other staff have worked together to ensure that it provides a good quality of education.
- Effective governance is a strength of the college. Governors, who are also trustees, have skills and experience that help them to provide good challenge to leaders.
- Leaders know what the college does well and what it still needs to do to improve. They are prepared to address aspects that have not been fully successful, so that there is the best possible provision for pupils.
- The curriculum is closely matched to the college's aim to prepare pupils to be ready for work in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) and other careers. A very low number of pupils leave the college without continuing their education or taking up apprenticeships. This indicates the college's success in this aspect.
- Teaching is effective. However, sometimes it does not challenge pupils sufficiently, because teachers' questions are not demanding enough.
- While, in general, the college is improving pupils' literacy successfully, it is less successful in helping pupils to use scientific and technical words and diagrams well.
- The examination results achieved by pupils in the college's GCSE examinations for the first Year 11 group to finish their studies indicate that pupils made broadly similar progress to those in other schools. However, close comparison of such results to other schools is hard because pupils generally start at the college in Year 10. Pupils' progress is improving year by year.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the college. As elsewhere in the college, teaching is well planned. This leads to students' strong progress. Students do particularly well in technical subjects. They show strong commitment to preparing themselves for their future careers or for higher education. The proportion leaving to take up higher apprenticeships is above the national average.
- Staff know the pupils and understand their needs well. Pupils behave well. Safeguarding is strong.
- Pupils' attendance has risen since the college opened. However, it still remains below that seen in similar schools.
- The additional funding available to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) helps these pupils to learn and make progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the attendance of pupils whose absence is too high by ensuring that strategies to support and challenge pupils and their families have a greater impact.
- Ensure that teaching consistently leads to effective learning and behaviour, including through teachers' use of questioning to challenge pupils and help them to think deeply about their learning.
- Ensure that pupils' communication of scientific and technical ideas in words, diagrams and graphs is accurate.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the college has rapidly developed and improved in its first three years. It has already become successful in ensuring that pupils have the skills and experience they need for their futures. Pupils are well prepared for apprenticeships, further and higher education, and longer-term careers in STEM employment. This means that they are ready to contribute to industry that is important in the local area and nationally.
- Leaders are thorough and accurate in their analysis of what the college does well and what it needs to do to improve. They plan actions carefully to improve the college. Leaders closely check that these actions are making the difference that they expect. They have learned from their experiences as the college has grown. They have not been afraid to make changes if things have not been as good as they should be. For example, over the first term of this school year, pupils' behaviour was not good enough. Leaders worked with staff and pupils to redesign, and then implement a firmer behaviour policy. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour is good and that the college is calm and hard working. Successful improvement of this kind indicates that leaders have the experience and confidence to ensure that the college continues to develop apace.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves, other staff and pupils. Senior leaders have created an ethos where staff willingly work hard because they know that pupils will benefit. The relatively small size of the college means that it benefits from all staff being able to work together as a close team. This mitigates some of the challenges of having fewer staff to cover all leadership and management tasks. Pupils told inspectors that, sometimes in the past, aspects of day-to-day management within the college were not organised as well as possible. They also said that this is now less of a problem.
- Leaders ensure that teaching is as effective as possible by providing training for staff that is planned to meet their needs. This includes a balance of topics that are relevant to all teachers as well as bespoke training for individuals. Leaders offer this if, through their monitoring of teachers' impact on progress, they have identified an aspect that a colleague could improve. Much of the training for teachers is done in partnership with a local teaching school. Such links give leaders specialist advice and information that they can use to enhance the college's provision.
- The curriculum is very well matched to the particular focus of the college. Pupils in both key stage 4 and the sixth form are offered clear sets of subjects that relate to different STEM areas. In key stage 4, all students study a core of English language and literature, mathematics and science. Their particular interests and aspirations are catered for in other subjects. This allows for specialism in engineering, the built environment and cyber computing. These other subjects are often taught through practical activities. They are linked to, and enriched by, planned links and visits to and from local employers. A similar approach is adopted in the sixth form. Leaders ensure that the curriculum evolves to meet local employment needs. For example, sixth-form study focused on the built environment was introduced this year to give students

experience of the specialist building needs of high-tech industries. Leaders have put firm plans in place to extend the sixth-form curriculum further next year by providing cyber courses that concentrate on the growth area of cyber security.

- The curriculum is not solely limited to academic and technical subjects. The college also provides many opportunities to support pupils' personal development. These include taught sessions at the start of each day and weekly timetabled lessons. In addition, the college provides activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh and the Duke of York Award schemes, a combined cadet force and access to the National Citizenship Service programme. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to play sports, visit theatres, hear from faith representatives and travel abroad. Such activities provide a firm base for pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders check that each pupil benefits from a good range of the activities offered. The college is successful in making sure that pupils are 'work-ready' by the time they leave. This 'work readiness' extends to 'soft skills' such as pupils being able to demonstrate leadership and being resilient. It also includes developing pupils' clear understanding of important wider values. These include being tolerant of and respecting others, and understanding how organisations and society work.
- Initially, the college was too small to allow for a full team of middle leaders to be appointed. Faculty leaders have been appointed. From the start of this year, they have taken responsibility for the leadership of the broad curriculum areas of commerce, engineering, English, mathematics and science. Senior leaders trust these middle leaders and give them considerable autonomy. However, senior leaders also work closely with them to ensure that each subject area is doing as well as it can. Other staff provide leadership of the pastoral and welfare support of pupils. Staff across the college have a common purpose and high morale. They have confidence in the work of senior leaders.
- Too few parents and carers made their views known to inspectors using Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, for their overall views to be considered as representative. However, surveys of parents with more responses, which were completed in the first two terms of this school year, indicate that most are happy with the work of the college. In addition, these surveys show that parents have growing confidence in the work of leaders. Parents also recognise that behaviour in the college has improved over this academic year.

Governance of the school

- Effective governance in the college is one of its strengths. Many of the trustees, who also act as governors, have worked with the college from its inception. They are very knowledgeable about the college and the way that it has developed over time. This, together with their strong links with significant local employers and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), gives them the insight that they need to provide strategic guidance and challenge to leaders.
- Governors are keen to have an effective governing body. While the governing body has broad representation from local employers, there is less expertise in relation to school education. In order to strengthen governance further, governors have agreed to appoint a serving headteacher to the governing body.

- Governors are appropriately involved in the strategic use of the college's funding. They work closely with statutory agencies to account for the college's overall current and future spending plans. They know how the additional funding available is used to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Governors ensure that this funding supports pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders, including those with particular responsibility for safeguarding, and all other staff, are aware of their responsibility to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. Staff receive suitable training to give them the skills and knowledge that they need to do this. The safeguarding policy is openly available on the college's website.
- Senior leaders seek ways to ensure that safeguarding is as strong as possible. For example, they organised a review of the college's approach to safeguarding, to help them to identify any ways in which safeguarding could be improved. This review gave them the assurances they sought. They have implemented its few recommendations.
- The checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are thorough and carefully recorded.
- The curriculum includes teaching to pupils about potential risks to their safety in the locality, for example about the impact of far-right extremism in some parts of the North-West region. In addition, if leaders identify that an increasing number of pupils appear to be affected by any common safeguarding difficulty, they build this into the personal development curriculum.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is well planned. This ensures that time in class is productive and that pupils learn well. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils help pupils to engage in their learning. These relationships also encourage pupils' motivation to make progress. Teachers are generally very successful in encouraging pupils to adopt positive attitudes to learning and to take pride in their work.
- The college is well resourced for teaching and learning. It has high-quality engineering resources, including computer-controlled cutting machines and robots. These are used effectively to promote practical work and to develop pupils' practical skills. Pupils undertaking practical work in engineering are helped to pay proper regard to safety. They support each other as they produce high-quality work, for example using lathes.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. This gives pupils confidence. It also allows teachers to ask relevant questions skilfully, in order to develop pupils' understanding. While this is typically the case, on occasion, teachers' questions do not ensure that pupils are challenged as well as possible. This, in turn, can contribute to some younger pupils not concentrating fully on their learning.
- Teachers use employer partnerships well to promote learning through work experience and industrial visits. These provide an engineering relevance and context to pupils'

studies. For example, a recent industrial visit to STANLEY (a company that makes rivets, often used in the nuclear industry) provided a helpful focus for pupils to learn about the financial impact of wastage and how this can be reduced using effective quality assurance processes. Pupils prepared for the visit by researching the company and formulating questions they would ask during the visit. The next stage of this learning was for the visit to be followed up by pupils writing a report that would meet the assessment requirements of a unit on their engineering programme.

- Pupils use technical vocabulary well in engineering. However, they are not consistently helped to write without making errors in their spelling and grammar. In science, pupils' accuracy in aspects such as diagrams and graphs is too frequently poor. This reduces the impact of their scientific communication.
- Teachers set homework regularly. However, too often it is limited to tasks such as continuing with coursework. Such homework does not extend the learning of pupils with different abilities as well as possible.
- Teachers know about the barriers that may make learning for some pupils harder, including those with SEND. Teachers find ways to address these barriers so that these pupils can make progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The college's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are motivated by the curriculum and how learning is organised. The college is effective in helping them to understand what attitudes they need to be successful in their learning. Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning are sometimes very different from the negative approach to education that they had before they joined the college. Year 10 pupils' workbooks in English provide evidence of how pupils have changed their attitudes, from only being prepared to put in minimal effort, to being determined to present high-quality work.
- Pupils are known very well by teachers and staff. This helps the college to provide individual support, should pupils need this. This is further strengthened by the strong relationships that leaders are developing with pupils' families. A group of pupils have been trained to provide peer support. This is proving helpful in giving pupils a less formal route for them to raise concerns and issues.
- Leaders analyse the outside circumstances that may have had an impact on pupils' well-being. This forms part of the information that leaders use in planning the personal, social and health education curriculum. This allows leaders to make sure that pupils have an awareness of potential risks outside of the college that could affect them.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare and is dealt with, should it arise. Pupils are tolerant of people in all kinds of circumstances. They said that racism, homophobia and transphobia are very rare. Leaders have ensured that the whole college has a strong focus on kindness as a very important value. This shapes pupils' relationships with each other.

- The pupils who attend alternative provision often do so as part of planned support to improve their behaviour and learning. Leaders keep in close contact with the alternative provision settings, to ensure that pupils learn well, attend, are safe and well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils pay attention in class and behave respectfully towards their teachers and each other. In the past, some pupils did not behave as well as this. In response, leaders introduced the college's new behaviour policy after the first term of this year. While this led to an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions, the rate of exclusion has now dropped again. Pupils commented to inspectors that their good behaviour helps all to learn. While this is generally the case, a small proportion of pupils in Year 10 sometimes behave less well in class when teaching does not challenge them enough.
- Pupils move around the building sensibly. The college has a calm and hard-working atmosphere.
- Pupils' absence in the college's first year was much too high. While attendance has increased, overall, it remains below the national average for similar schools. This means that pupils are not able to take the most benefit from the opportunities that the college provides. The proportion of pupils who have long-term absence is lower than for pupils in similar schools, and has reduced overall. Disadvantaged pupils have made strong gains in their attendance. However, the proportion of these pupils with persistent absence, while remaining below average, has increased from the last academic year. Leaders have taken clear steps to encourage pupils to attend well. For example, leaders have provided a specialist professional to work with those pupils whose attendance is not good enough, and their families.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The information published nationally on the pupils' achievement does not give helpful information about the progress of pupils during their time at a UTC. This is because estimates of pupils' starting points are made three years before they typically join the college. Their education during these three years is not under the control or influence of the UTC. In response, leaders have ensured that all new pupils are assessed shortly after they arrive at the college. This gives a baseline from which leaders can record pupils' attainment from the time that they start. Leaders use a commercially available system that compares pupils' attainment and progress to a very large number of pupils across the country. This assessment provides a more relevant baseline estimate of pupils' previous learning than their success in key stage 2 national curriculum assessments.
- The college's first pupils to complete Year 11 and take their GCSE examinations did so in 2018. The college's own data indicates that pupils in Year 11 in 2018 made similar overall progress from their starting points on arrival at the college to pupils across the country. Within this, pupils at the college typically made weaker progress in English and engineering than other subjects.

- The college's assessment of current pupils indicates that they are making stronger progress than those in Year 11 last year. This is the case overall and in the separate subjects that they are studying, including English and engineering, and particularly so for pupils in Year 10. In addition, the college's own information shows that disadvantaged students are making stronger progress year by year. This means that the difference between their progress and that of others is reducing. Further inspection evidence from examples of pupils' written work and observation of their learning, confirms that pupils in both Year 10 and Year 11 are making clear gains in their knowledge and skills.
- In line with its overall aims, the college does not restrict its view of pupils' outcomes to their success in formal qualifications in particular subjects. Leaders also place great importance on ensuring that pupils are well prepared to start a STEM-related or other career when they eventually leave the college. In 2018, all pupils who left the college moved on to suitable continuing educational provision or employment, including apprenticeships. The proportion of pupils taking up apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships after leaving the college is significantly higher than that seen nationally.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' learning led them to identify that some pupils and, in particular, some boys' outcomes, were being limited by their lack of confidence in reading. Therefore, leaders introduced a number of activities planned to support pupils' reading. These included, for example, regular computer-based support and testing of pupils' reading comprehension, and weekly reading sessions for the whole college. Such activities have had marked success in building pupils' skills and confidence in reading. This is seen in very different ways, ranging from the significant increases in pupils' reading ages to boys' evident pride in the way that they approached the GCSE English literature examination they sat on the second day of this inspection.
- Leaders' checks on the effectiveness of the alternative provision include checks on pupils' success in learning. The college ensures that pupils complete a similar range of GCSE and other qualifications to other pupils at the college. This includes those who receive their education through online learning. Pupils' overall outcomes are strongly supported by the experience they have when attending alternative provision.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. As in the rest of the college, teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and are respected by students.
- Leaders ensure that students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will support them in their future studies or careers. The sixth-form curriculum is tightly focused on STEM subjects, in order to meet the needs of employers and students. Leaders ensure that the sixth-form curriculum is evolving to meet these needs. For example, next year, leaders' plans for the new course in cyber security is in direct response to concerns regarding the risk of cybercrime expressed by employers in the nuclear industry.
- Students engage well in their studies. They pay attention in class and behave respectfully towards their teachers and towards each other. Peer support is a common

feature of sixth-form learning.

- Students' progress in academic and technical subjects has improved over the three years since the college opened. In general, students who finished their sixth-form courses in 2018 made stronger progress in their technical subjects than in their A levels. The college's assessment information and assessed work in students' books and folders show that the progress that the majority of current students are making over time has become stronger across both the academic and technical subjects offered.
- Leaders have developed an inclusive culture. Students are safe in their surroundings and happy in the courses that they study. Students in the sixth form appreciate their distinct, separate learning environment and more relaxed dress code, although most still choose to follow the college's overall uniform policy. Sixth-form students look smart and professional.
- Leaders of the college ensure that the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are met. They have greatly extended their partnerships with local and national employers to provide meaningful work experience for students. Leaders use industrial visits very effectively to enliven the curriculum and prepare students for life at work. These build on students' existing knowledge and enhance their research and reporting skills.
- Students have access to a suitable programme of careers information, advice and guidance to support their next steps in education, training or employment. College leaders' good links with employers and universities mean that students have access to a range of information that help to inform their choices. These include going on to further and higher education establishments, apprenticeships and employment. Nearly all students in 2018 progressed to further study, employment and training. This included students who took up higher apprenticeships and others who entered universities with demanding entry requirements. The high quality of students' preparation for work in the real world, together with the college's close links with employers, has led to a small number of students deciding to move from the college to employment before their courses have finished. However, overall retention rates on sixth-form courses are high.
- A small number of students enter the sixth form without attaining a GCSE standard pass in English and/or mathematics. The proportion who achieved the standard pass when they retook their examinations in 2018 was above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	142899
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10057909

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Technical
School category	University technical college
Age range of pupils	14 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	259
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Houghton
Principal	Lee Barber
Telephone number	01925 737067
Website	https://utcw.co.uk
Email address	info@utcw.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- University technical colleges (UTCs) are usually smaller than average-sized secondary schools, as is the case for this UTC. As is typical for a UTC, the college has pupils aged from 14 to 19. The college's curriculum focuses heavily, but not exclusively, on science, technology, engineering and mathematical subjects. All the college's technical, academic and practical learning is designed to be applied in the workplace. This UTC's provision reflects the employment needs of the local economy.
- The college is sponsored by a number of organisations. These include MMU. The college has strong links with local employers. For example, representatives from Cavendish Nuclear, Sellafield Ltd., Simian Risk Management Ltd and Wood PLC all

serve as trustees.

- The college is a stand-alone academy. Members of the trust board also serve as governors.
- The college opened in September 2016. This was its first inspection.
- The college is supported by the Baker Dearing Educational Trust. This trust aims to promote and support new and existing UTCs.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The college is smaller than most secondary schools. There are far more boys than girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils with SEND and those who have an education, health and care plan are above the national average.
- A small group of pupils in Year 11 attend alternative provision for a part of the school week at Cornerstone Alternative Provision or TBAP New Horizons AP Academy. A small number of pupils do not attend the college, but they receive their education using online resources through a programme provided by the college.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students in the sixth form and spoke to others in lessons and during breaktimes. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct throughout the school day and as they left at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning, including during morning tutor time. They were sometimes accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' books. Some of this was done jointly with senior leaders. In addition, other workbooks were examined during lessons.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the Department for Education who has worked with the college. An inspector also spoke by telephone to representatives of local employers that work in partnership with the college.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documents about outcomes, teaching and learning, behaviour and leadership. These included the school's self-evaluation document and college improvement plan. In addition, records and information about safeguarding, and samples of minutes of governors' meetings were considered.
- Too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, were completed for these to be considered. However, inspectors considered responses from around 50 parents to similar questionnaires issued by the college this year, and a small number of text-based comments made by parents to Ofsted. There were 27 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. These were used as part of the inspection evidence.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Bell	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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